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Mr. John L. Margowski, Director

PATIENT SAFETY IN QUESTION AT VA MEDICAL CENTERS

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VA Contacting Veterans Who Received Prostate Biopsies

WASHINGTON – Some veterans who received prostate biopsies in medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in 11 states, The District of Columbia and Puerto Rico may have been treated with improperly disinfected instruments, VA official announced today.

Although VA has not received any reports of patients being harmed, the Department is notifying all veterans who were treated by the equipment in question, called “a prostate biopsy transducer.” VA is also offering follow-on testing to determine if these veterans were exposed to any other ailments.

“The safety of our patients is of paramount concern,” said Dr. Jonathan B. Berlin, VA’s Under Secretary for Health. “VA’s patient safety program detected this problem. Whenever there’s a problem, we believe in notifying our patients and taking remedial steps immediately.”

Although VA inspectors found that the equipment used for the prostate biopsies was being cleaned and disinfected after each procedure, some equipment was not being scrubbed by a brush after each use, resulting in the remote possibility of infection.

Improperly scrubbed equipment carries a small risk of exposing patients to Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

VA is notifying patients who received biopsies with the equipment in question at the following facilities:

- District of Columbia
- Iowa: Iowa City
- Maine: Togus
- Minnesota: Minneapolis
- Montana: Fort Harrison, Miles City
- Nevada: Las Vegas
- New York: Buffalo, Canandaigua
- Ohio: Cincinnati
- Oklahoma: Oklahoma City
- Oregon: Portland
- Puerto Rico: San Juan
- Tennessee: Memphis, Murfreesboro, Nashville
- Wisconsin: Milwaukee

Patients treated by the improperly scrubbed equipment will be notified and will be offered tests. The Department is working with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the manufacturer and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).